

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly cancel claims 13 and 14 without prejudice or disclaimer as to the subject matter contained therein.

Kindly replace claims 1, 2, 10, 12, and 18 as follows:

- C 1
1. (Amended) Process for the separation of plasma from blood or from a buffy coat fraction [continuous purification and concentration of leukocytes from blood], characterized in that said process comprises the following steps:
- B3
- (a) separating plasma from the blood by filtration in order to achieve a filtered buffy coat fraction;
 - (b) adding an aqueous solution, which is hypotonic in relation to plasma, to the buffy coat fraction from step (a), in order to achieve lysis [lysatation] of erythrocytes contained in the buffy coat fraction;
 - (c) mixing the buffy coat fraction and the aqueous hypotonic solution from step (b) in a mixing device;
 - (d) leading the mixture from step (c) through a retention vessel;
 - (e) leading the mixture from step (d) through a centrifuge in order to separate the leukocytes;
 - (f) collecting the separated leukocytes from step (e).

2. (Amended) Process according to claim 1, characterized in that a buffy coat fraction, obtained from blood, is used instead [in stead] of blood in step (a) and plasma is removed from this buffy coat fraction by filtration.

10. (Twice Amended) Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the process is automatically operated and adapted for clean in place (CIP) cleaning and [(SIP)] sanitation in place (SIP), wherein

the CIP is performed by automatically cleaning a system at site by pumping cleaning solutions in the system; and

the SIP is performed by sanitizing a system at site by a liquid or a gas which kills microorganisms, or heat.

12. (Amended) Apparatus for separation of plasma from blood or from a buffy coat fraction [continuous purification and concentration of leukocytes, from blood], characterized in that said apparatus includes the following means:

- (i) a membrane filter means for separating plasma from the blood by filtration in order to achieve a filtered buffy coat fraction;
- (ii) a retention vessel [static mixer] means for mixing the buffy coat fraction and an aqueous hypotonic solution in order to achieve lysis [lysation] of erythrocytes contained in the buffy coat fraction;
- (iii) a retention vessel means;
- (iv) a centrifuge means in order to separate the leukocytes.

18. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 11, characterized in that the
centrifuge is adapted to continuous [or semi-continuous] separation of the
leukocytes.
